Karl Barth Society NEWSLETTER Number 9 Spring 1994

MEMBERSHIP IN THE KARL BARTH SOCIETY

Readers of the Newsletter (and anyone else who is interested) are invited to join the Karl Barth Society of North America.

To become a member of the Barth Society, send your name, address, and **annual dues of $10** to:

Professor Russell Palmer
Dept. of Philosophy and Religion
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Omaha, NE 68182-0265

Members whose dues were paid prior to May 1993 are urged to send in their annual renewal.

KBSNA sessions held at 1993 AAR/SBL meeting in D.C.

For the fifth year in a row, the Karl Barth Society sponsored a program in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature in Washington, D.C. last November.

At the session on Friday afternoon, November 19, Walter Lowe (Emory University) discussed the relation between Barth and Kant, using material drawn from his book *Theology and Difference: The Wound of Reason* (Indiana University Press, 1993). Lowe is especially interested in the work of Derrida, and focused on Barth's *Romans* commentary.

The second presentation was by W. Stacy Johnson (Austin Seminary), whose topic was "Vocative Existence," dealing with the Holy Spirit in Barth's theology.

On Saturday morning, November 20, Garrett Green (Connecticut College) presented a paper entitled "Challenging the Religious Studies Canon: Karl Barth on Religion" -- a topic which was especially appropriate to the AAR venue!

The final session included a report by John Morrison on his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Virginia on "The Influence of Karl Barth's Shift to Theological Objectivity on the Thought of Thomas Torrance."

The session continued with brainstorming concerning possible future topics for these meetings, and concluded with discussion of the future direction of the Barth Society's involvement with the AAR (see below).

Another KBS program is planned prior to this year's AAR/SBL Annual Meeting in Chicago (November 18-19, 1994).

No KBSNA conference in Elmhurst this summer; event rescheduled for June 1995

According to Ron Goetz, who was in charge of preparing for the 1994 KBSNA spring/summer conference, a decision has been made not to hold the event this year as originally planned.

After the successful conferences held at Elmhurst College in June 1992 and in Toronto last June, it was anticipated that there would be such a conference each year, probably alternating between Toronto and the Chicago area.

However, on account of scheduling and other difficulties, and in view of the strong program put together by Wayne Stumme for the Barth conference this summer at Luther Seminary in St. Paul (see enclosed brochure), it has been decided to postpone the Elmhurst conference until next year.

The theme proposed for the 1995 conference is: Karl Barth, the first theologian of the post-Christian era (on the ground that Barth was the first to presuppose a post-Christian context for theological work).

Persons with suggestions for presenters or other program features are invited to contact Professor Goetz at Elmhurst College, 190 Prospect Ave., Elmhurst, Illinois 60126-3296.

Discussion of future program possibilities

Topics for future sessions suggested at the Saturday morning discussion (above) included:

- A look at different readings of Karl Barth -- e.g. Barth according to Torrance vs. Barth according to Moltmann or Jüngel. Are these different Barths?

• What about the way Barth gets to the identity of man and woman? Is the particularity of male/female essential to Barth's anthropology, or could it just as well be conceived as person/person?
• Do we do theology as an in-group exercise or is theology public?
• What does Barth contribute to a theology of ministry?
• What about Barth and the doctrine of Israel (the Jewish people)?
• The future of Barth's theology, in relation to such matters as political theology, Israel, or the trinity (Jenson's reading of Barth) -- are students correcting the master?
• The dialectical theology of the 1920s (as in W. Lowe's paper) -- "moving out rather than closing in," as someone put it.

Whither the KBS-AAR relationship?

The other main subject of discussion at the November 20 session was the future relationship of the Karl Barth Society to the AAR.

Some urged that the Barth Society program be incorporated into the structure of the AAR Annual Meeting proper. It was suggested that Garrett Green's paper on Barth and religious studies provided a basis for such a step. Some felt this would make the Barth program seem less sectarian. Others expressed reservations about conforming to AAR expectations instead of being guided by theological concerns.

Opinion was divided between those who find it inconvenient to come a day early for the Barth Society program, and would thus prefer a section on Barth as part of the AAR schedule, and those who observed that, in becoming part of the official program, we would relinquish any control over scheduling, with the result that our program could end up on, say, Tuesday afternoon rather than in prime time.

An alternative suggestion was that the Barth Society might seek to emulate the Bonhoeffer Society which maintains its own identity while also having a consultation on Bonhoeffer within the AAR program. (The Tillich Society also has such a dual status.) There seemed to be considerable support for pursuing this third ("both/and") strategy.

Other suggestions were that the papers to be presented be published in advance, so that the meeting time could be devoted to discussion rather than to the reading of papers, and that copies of papers from each conference be made available at later ones for those who were unable to attend the original presentation.

Pittsburgh group studying *Church Dogmatics*

Steve Crocco, Associate Professor at Pittsburgh Seminary, writes that a small group of pastors, students, and seminary faculty gather in his home each month for the purpose of reading through the *Church Dogmatics*. They have been at it for a year and a half, and are now in the early part of I/2. They estimate that it will take them seven or eight years to get through the entire *Dogmatics*.

Editor's note: We have a similar small group in Omaha that has been meeting since 1966 (!) and we are now nearing the end of IV/2 (!), so the forecast of seven or eight years may be a bit optimistic -- although the Pittsburghers may well be more disciplined than the Omahans have been!

The Omaha group has found that the advantage and/or disadvantage of reading Barth is that all the big theological questions keep coming up, and we keep digressing to discuss them -- at the expense of "covering ground" in the *Dogmatics*!

By the way, are there any other such Barth study groups out there? It would be interesting to hear of your experiences. -- RWP

What about regional subsections?

Steve Crocco's letter raises another question worth considering. He reports that people in Pittsburgh are interested in forming "a subsection of the KBSNA along the lines of the Chicago/Elmhurst and Toronto subsections," and he asks how they might connect to the national body.

Editor's response: The structure of the Barth Society may be somewhat unclear. The "national body" referred to would be the Executive Board of the KBSNA, which was last elected at a business meeting of the Society at the 1992 Elmhurst conference (see Newsletter #6 [October 1992] for a report).

In terms of program design, it was intended that there would be an annual conference which would alternate between an eastern location (Toronto) and a midwest location (the Chicago area). However, those were not intended to be regional subsections.

The expectation was that these annual conferences would be national in scope (although of course some people would find one location more convenient than the other). And there is no reason why such conferences would have to be restricted to a Toronto-Elmhurst rotation. I suspect that the Executive Board would welcome a proposal to hold the national conference in Pittsburgh in a given year.

[continued]

In addition, the board may want to consider the idea of regional subsections in an organizational sense. Are there other groups elsewhere in the U.S. and Canada that would like to organize in such a fashion?

The other component of the Barth Society enterprise, of course, is the program held every year in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature in November. In recent years Walt Lowe has been in charge of arranging this program, and it has been largely independent of the Executive Board of the KBSNA. While a number of people have been attending both the AAR meeting and the Toronto/ Elmhurst conference, many choose one or the other. At the risk of oversimplification, it seems that the AAR sessions draw primarily academicians, while more pastors are apt to attend the KBS conferences. – RWP

ADDRESS CORRECTIONS NEEDED

Now that the Newsletter is being sent by bulk mail rather than first class, we are no longer aware of undelivered issues due to change of address. If you (or any member of the Barth Society you know of) move, please notify us of the change so we can correct our mailing list.

Sixth Biennial Barth Conference Set for June 20-22 in St. Paul, Minn.

"God's Freedom and Ours" will be the theme of a theological conference for pastors, teachers, and students to be held June 20-22 at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. The conference, which will deal with soteriology, ethics, and the mission of the church today, is sponsored by the Institute for Mission in the U.S.A. of the ELCA.

Speakers will be Gerhard Forde, Bruce McCormack, Walter Bouman, Martin Rumscheidt, Katherine Sonderegger, Timothy Lull, and John Webster.

All readers of the Newsletter are invited to attend. A brochure describing the conference is enclosed with this issue of the Newsletter. If the brochure is missing from your copy, contact Dr. Wayne Stumme at (614) 235-4136 for information. His address is 2199 East Main Street, Columbus, Ohio 43209-2334.

BARTHCHIVE?

Steve Crocco, Librarian at Pittsburgh Seminary, wonders whether anyone has volunteered to provide a home for a special collection of materials by and related to Barth, something of a clearinghouse for Barth studies, which has been referred to as a "Barthchive" (!)

He reports that there is some interest in doing that in Pittsburgh, but notes that "it is a large project which requires a serious commitment from someone in Pittsburgh and the national KBSNA." He points out that Pittsburgh Seminary does have a strong foundation for such a collection.

Editor's note: Markus Barth taught at the seminary for a number of years, and Karl Barth's desk is on display there.

CORRESPONDENCE

DISSERTATION ON JÜNGEL

I am interested in Barth studies because I am working on a dissertation on Eberhard Jüngel's doctrine of God with David Tracy at the University of Chicago Divinity School. The dissertation is entitled "Toward Divine Relationality: Eberhard Jüngel's New Trinitarian, Postmetaphysical Approach." Jüngel is one of Barth's best interpreters and perhaps the most able contemporary spokesman of the theological legacy that Barth founded.

Mark Mattes
St. John's Lutheran Church
Antigo, Wisconsin

CALVIN, SCHLEIERMACHER, BARTH

I was given your name and address by Donald McKim, whom I met at the 16th Century Studies Conference in St. Louis... I have long been a student and teacher of Barth's theology, and am currently working on a book project in which I will compare and contrast the understanding of self-representation in the theology of Calvin, Schleiermacher, and Barth. Hence membership in the Barth Society is of great interest.

Randall C. Zachman
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana

"JESUS LOVES ME!"

In the last issue of the Newsletter (#8, Fall 1993) we published the following inquiry from Bill Jarrell :

> I have often heard that when someone asked Barth to sum up his theology, he replied "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." I would like to know if he ever actually said that or if it is only one of those apocryphal stories.

Martin Rumscheidt sends the following response:

I bear some responsibility for that story; I retell it in my (now out of print) book *Fragments Grave and Gay* (London: Collins, 1971), p. 124:

"If some day somebody absolutely insists on donating a stained-glass window in his [Barth's] memory and and wants to encircle his head with one of his famous sayings, let him choose his reply to a student at

Richmond Theological Seminary in Virginia who asked him what the most momentous discovery of his long theological life had been: 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.'"

I used that story already in a memorial service for Barth on December 19, 1968 in Toronto. My source for it was Eberhard Busch, who had told it to me in the summer of 1964 when, visiting Basel, I chatted with him about Barth's 1962 U.S.A. trip. Eberhard showed me a print of the famous photo of Barth in Richmond, or at least in Virginia at one of the Civil War battle sites he visited there, with the old rifle in his hands, exclaiming after he had hit the target "Just like Wilhelm Tell!" That's when Eberhard told me of this incident.

Martin Rumscheidt
Atlantic School of Theology
Halifax, Canada

Note: *Fragments Grave and Gay* is a collection of Barth's essays which Martin edited and translated.

NAME THAT PFARRER

Some readers of this Newsletter may recall media publicity of a 1992 court case involving the return of religious treasures to a cathedral in Germany which had been stolen at the end of World War II.

During my years of graduate study in Bavaria from 1982-86, I, together with my friend James W. Erdman, had opportunity to travel twice to what was then East Germany in order to do research employing church records from several congregations. One of the churches we visited was in Quedlinburg where we were befriended by the pastor of the Evangelische Domkirche, Friedemann Goßlau, and his family. We later discovered that it was from the Domschatz of this Quedlinburg church that invaluable works of art (most dating from the 10th century, including a chest which belonged to Henry I) had been stolen. These only reappeared in Texas in the 1980s.

All of this is by way of introduction to an item of historical interest regarding Karl Barth. When Pastor Goßlau came to the U.S. in Spring 1992 to retrieve the long-lost treasures, we had the opportunity of hosting him and his wife, Uschi, for an entire week. During our marvelous conversations, I learned that it was in response to a letter from Pastor Friedemann Goßlau that Karl Barth wrote in August 1958 his well-known essay, "Brief an einen Pfarrer in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik." Eberhard Busch comments: "Barth wrote this letter virtually at a sitting in the Thurneysens' holiday house at Kapf in Emmental" (Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976], pp. 433f.). Up until now, however, I don't believe the correct identity of the unknown "Pfarrer" has been made known. Before the collapse of the wall, it was necessary to keep such information private.

Realizing my interest in this revelation, Pastor Goßlau subsequently mailed me a photocopy of the inscription in his own personal copy of the "Brief..." written in the hand of Barth. It reads: "'Dem Pfarrer in der DDR'/in alter and neuer Zuwendung/Karl Barth."

Craig L. Nessan
Wartburg Theological Seminary
Dubuque, Iowa

ENGLISH BARTH SCHOLAR

I have become acquainted here with a fine Barth scholar (and they are rare in England): Nigel Bigger, who lectures primarily in ethics and is highly regarded here. He recently published a revision of his Chicago U. dissertation done with Jim Gustafson: *The Hastening That Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* (Oxford University Press). I have just read it and think it is first rate... He also edited the papers that were given at the Oxford commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Barth's birth: *Reckoning with Barth* (Mowbray, 1988).

John Hesselink
Oxford, U.K.

"First annual" Barth symposium held in Philadelphia

On November 18, 1993, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia held its "first annual" symposium on the theology of Karl Barth.

The featured speaker was Trevor Hart, Lecturer in Systematic Theology at the University of Aberdeen, who presented a paper on 'The Word, the Words, and the Witness: A Response to Karl Barth's Doctrine of Proclamation."

Dr. Hart's paper was organized under seven headings:

1. Preaching and the dogmatic task.
2. A "theology of proclamation"?
3. The threefold and twofold form of God's self-proclamation. "God's Word is given in three forms, or subsists in three modes: the man Jesus of Nazareth, the text of scripture, and the preaching of the church. Each form constitutes a duality in unity; each has both a divine and a human aspect between which is posited a relationship of identity. At the level of the human, there are clear and important distinctions of order and function to be discerned. But at the level of the divine the same Word of God speaks in each place, and with equal authority in each. 'Revelation' can mean either the historical manifestation of God in Jesus Christ, to which scripture and preaching point, or the event of divine self-unveiling which happens in and through each of the three forms."

4. The scandal of identity. "There is a scandal, an offense, to be reckoned with if we take seriously *both* the full humanity of the threefold Word, *and* its direct identity with the Word of God himself. This scandal can be denied by, e.g., elevating the text of scripture above the level of ordinary human textuality, or by failing to take seriously the identity of our preaching with God's own Word. Barth insists that the paradox, the scandal, must be maintained..."

5. Revelation and concealment: an essential paradox. "In the midst of his revealedness, God remains hidden by the human Jesus, the human words of scripture and preaching....As human realities they do not 'reveal God' in any obvious way. God gives himself to be known...in and through these creaturely realities which yet remain fully creaturely..."

6. Inspiration as event: the Word, the flesh, and the Spirit. "The creaturely realities of scripture and preaching become the Word of God, are the Word of God, as God is pleased to identify himself with them in the event of revelation....Inspiration is literally the 'enspiriting' of our words by God himself."

7. Narrative and disclosure: the nature and function of the biblical text. "For Barth it is the text of scripture precisely as text, i.e. in its final given literary form, to which God commits himself and through which he speaks. Thus we should not seek to identify the Word of God with the 'facts' behind the text, or with eternal truths of reason or morality which we can extract from the text...

"Barth has a narrative understanding of the literary mode and function of scripture. He steers between 'literalism' and expressivism,' and approaches scripture as one might a realistic novel in which one is invited to enter a given world of reality and meaning, and in which ineffable realities are referred to in an appropriately metaphorical and analogical manner. The reference of the text to the reality of God himself, the appropriate correspondence of the metaphors and analogies to him, can be trusted precisely because Christ is risen and bears witness to himself through the text. Treating the canon as one large narrative, Barth applies a christological hermeneutic to it" (cf. George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*).

The symposium was attended by nearly 40 people, including Eastern Seminary faculty, students, and alumni, as well as faculty from several local colleges.

Conveners of the symposium were Elouise Renich Fraser, Professor of Systematic Theology at Eastern, and Scott Rodin, EBTS Vice President for Advancement and Adjunct Professor of Theology. The former did her doctoral work on Barth's anthropology at Vanderbilt; the latter did his doctoral work at Aberdeen on Barth's doctrine of evil and theodicy.

It is hoped that the 1994 symposium will feature an extended program with a major paper and a few shorter papers with ample time for discussion.

(Based on information submitted by Scott Rodin)

Barth on AtomicWar

by Paul Matheny

Barth's theology has often been confused with our interpretation of his theology. Nowhere has this been so pronounced than in his ethical thought. Many in the Western world have never been able to forgive him his rejection of resistance to the Communist state. This is something that is affecting his reception within the newly "reunited" Germany.

American theologians have never quite understood how it was possible for him to resist the Nazi state and not join them in their moral opposition to Soviet oppression. The result has been confusion about his stance on war and resistance. Some go so far as to argue that he changed his mind in regard to this question; and many do not see his nearness to the pacifist stand.

Barth's position has been complicated by the distinction he makes between the pre-atomic era and the atomic era. This point has been missed while weak points in his theology have been sought out in order to discover the reason for his "change in mind." In my opinion the issue is not to be resolved by uncovering his own political personal commitment, but by an appreciation of the consistency of his ethical thought. We need to take seriously his own claim that he did not correct himself on this issue.

It is my opinion that the systematic consequences of his thought are brought to their fruition in the question of the use of atomic weapons. He has not altered his stand on the "just war" as spelled out in KD III/4, but rather his opposition to the use of atomic weapons is a result of his stand on war.

The following text illustrates Barth's stance on war as a *Grenzfall,* or necessary form of defense, and on the justifiable resistance to an unjust war. These theses were written immediately prior to the EKD Synod of April 1958. They appeared anonymously and were directed at the Protestant Church of Germany as it convened to discuss its stand on the re-armament of Germany.

[continued]

In theses 1 and 2 Barth simply restates, in short form, his position spelled out in KD III/4 on the *Grenzfall* of justifiable defense -- a position that is at the heart of his theory of a "just war." In theses 3 and 4 he states that atomic weapons cannot pass the test. They are weapons unacceptable within a just war and cannot be a political means of defense (thesis 5). The church can only denounce their use (thesis 6). Not only the use, but the very manufacture and possession of such weapons is a sin against God and neighbor. The final thesis declares that the issue of the use of atomic weapons is a question of *status confessionis (eine Bekenntnisfrage).*[1]

Interestingly enough, after their publication several German newspapers actually reported that Barth opposed the theses. They assumed too much.[2] The role of Barth's thought in defense of the re-armament had become more important news than the position of the man himself.[3]

[1]K. Barth, "Die Kirche und die politische Frage von heute," in *Eine Schweizer Stimme* (Zürich, 1945), pp. 69ff.
[2]K. Barth, "Die christliche Kirchen und die heutige Wirklichkeit," in *Der Götze wackelt* (Berlin 1961), pp. 101ff.
[3]E. Busch, *Karl Barths Lebenslauf* (1975), p. 447.

Ten Theses Concerning the Question of Atomic "Armament"

I. From time immemorial, in all its forms, war is the last problematic means of political argument between peoples and states.

II. The Church of all lands and times has held the preparation and application of this means until today, for good and not so good reasons, to be possible.

III. The prospect of a future war conducted using nuclear weapons has created a new situation, concerning which the Church cannot remain neutral.

IV. War as atomic war means the mutual destruction of the peoples participating in it with the inclusion of innumerable human beings who are not involved.

V. War as atomic war is thereby unfit for political argumentation because its assumptions show the use of annihilating means.

VI. For this reason the church, Christianity, and the individual Christian can, in advance, only say no to a war conducted with atomic weapons.

VII. Already the preparation for such a war is, under all circumstances, sin against God and neighbor, to which the Church cannot permit itself to become a party.

VIII. Consequently, we demand, in the name of the Gospel, that the preparation for this war within our land and state be put to an end, without consideration of other matters.

IX. We ask all, who seriously wish to be Christian, to refuse, without reservation and under all circumstances, all support for the preparation of atomic war.

X. A standpoint counter to this or neutrality to this question is impossible for the Christian. Both would signify the denial of all three articles of the Christian faith and a break with the One, Holy, and Universal Church.

Karl Barth
March 1958

(translated by Paul Matheny)

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR FALL MEETING

The Karl Barth Society program prior to this year's **AAR/SBL Annual Meeting** in Chicago (November 18-19, 1994) is currently being planned, according to Walt Lowe, program coordinator.

Bruce McCormack, who holds the Weyerhaeuser Chair of Systematic Theology at Princeton Seminary, will present a paper on **"The Von Balthasar Thesis and the Myth of the Neo-Orthodox Barth."** Prof. McCormack is the author of a soon-to-be-published book on *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology.*

(Incidentally, a complete English translation of *The Theology of Karl Barth* by Hans Urs von Balthasar has recently appeared. Published by Ignatius Press, it replaces the severely abridged English version which appeared in 1971.)

In addition to Bruce McCormack's presentation, we are seeking **papers to fill the other two slots** on the program. **Proposals** (limited to **two pages**) may be sent to:

Russell W. Palmer
Department of Philosophy and Religion
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Omaha, NE 68182-0265

Deadline for proposals is **June 10**.